

DIVERSITY IN THE BAR

During the past year, NOBA has taken several notable steps demonstrating its enduring commitment to diversity and inclusion in the Bar. On November 11, 2015, at the behest of Past-President Walter Leger, Jr., NOBA issued a “Statement of Enduring Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion,” which denounced acts of discrimination as threats to NOBA’s mission and NOBA members’ rights to enjoy the benefits of that membership. Upon being sworn in as President of NOBA, Judy Barrasso stated her intentions to further address issues of diversity during her term. On January 19, 2016, the Board participated in the Anti-Defamation League’s A Community of Difference Training, which was focused on examining and identifying bias so that collaborative action plans could be developed to ensure the existence of an equitable environment in the Bar.

In May 2016, the Board approved several amendments to NOBA’s by-laws, which are aimed at promoting diversity in NOBA’s leadership. In particular, the composition of the nominating committee has been changed. Previously, the nominating committee, which prepares and submits nominations for officers and directors of NOBA, consisted of the President, President-Elect, and four immediate Past Presidents. With the recent by-laws amendments, the nominating committee consists of the President, President-Elect, the immediate Past President, the President of the New Orleans Bar Foundation, the immediate Past Chair of the Young Lawyers Section, a delegate of the Minorities in the Profession Committee, and a delegate of the Women in the Profession Committee. This year’s nominating committee is chaired by Immediate Past President Walter Leger, Jr., and the members of the committee are Judy Barrasso, Chris Ralston, Darryl Phillips, Ross Molina, Cory Vidal, and Alicia Bendana. The committee is scheduled to meet on September 28, 2016. NOBA members are encouraged to inform the committee if they are interested in serving on the Board to ensure that the purpose of these important revisions to the by-laws is fully realized. Lawyers also are encouraged to join NOBA, renew their memberships, and actively participate in NOBA committees so there will be diversity of thought as the organization continues to pursue its mission.